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ClickOnDetroit.com

Amber Alert Issued For Child Who Needs Medication

POSTED: 10:23 am EST January 17, 2008

UPDATED: 10:39 am EST January 17, 2008

GRAND BLANC TOWNSHIP, Mich. -- The Grand Blanc Township Police Department has issued an Amber Alert for a 16-year-old boy who is on medication.

The teen, William John Foote, 16, is white, 5 feet 9 inches, 130 pounds with brown eyes and brown hair.

Police said without his medication, Foote could endanger his health and may be suicidal.

The child may be heading to family in the Otsego-area.

Foote was last seen wearing a dark hooded sweatshirt, jeans, a possibly twp-tone brown winter coat and blue backpack.

If you have any information call Grand Blanc Township police at 810-424-2611.

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Autopsy of 3-year-old Pontiac girl could prompt charges

January 17, 2008

By GINA DAMRON

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The autopsy of a 3-year-old Pontiac girl — who was taken off life support Wednesday after being brought to Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital with several injuries — is under way, according to the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office.

According to Pontiac police, medical personnel said that, in their preliminary findings, the girl's death did not appear to be an accident. Police did not release information on what type of injuries the girl sustained, but said the child's mother and live-in boyfriend had inconsistent accounts of how the girl was injured.

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The mother's other three young children have been taken into protective custody, but no one has been arrested in the 3-year-old's death, said Sgt. Kevin Braddock.

Names of the mother and the boyfriend have not yet been released because the investigation is ongoing, Braddock said.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080117/NEWS03/80117035>

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Article published Jan 17, 2008
Drunken driver takes son, police for a ride
Times Herald

Lexington -- A drunken driver took his 15-year-old son and several police cars on a ride out of town last night.

Lance Gillette, 37, ran over Pomeroy Funeral Home's street sign on his way south on M-25 at about 6:45 p.m.

At Burns Line Road in Worth Township, the Lexington police officer following Gillette with lights activated was joined by a Sanilac County Sheriff's deputy.

At Fisher Road, Gillette ended up in a ditch. Still, he was able to gain enough traction to ram the Sheriff's cruiser. The deputy was able to exit his unit and use a stun gun on Gillette who was transported to the Sanilac County jail and chaged with drunken driving, child endangerment and felonious assault. No one was injured.

For more news updates throughout the day, click on www.thetimesherald.com.



THE BAY CITY TIMES

Judges hear arguments in appeal of Yost verdict

Thursday, January 17, 2008

By **CRYSTAL McMORRIS**

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A panel of the Michigan Court of Appeals heard arguments on Tuesday from an attorney seeking to have Donna A. Yost's conviction in the death of her

7-year-old daughter reversed.

Yost was convicted by a Bay County jury in April 2006 of murdering her 7-year-old daughter, Monique, who died in 1999 in Bay City after consuming a fatal dose of antidepressant medication.

Appellate attorney Gail Rodwan argued that Yost, 47, did not receive a fair trial during the six-week trial in Bay County Circuit Court. The jury convicted her of felony murder - murder while in the commission of child abuse - as well as second-degree murder. Bay County Circuit Judge William J. Caprathe sentenced Yost to life in prison without chance of parole. She is lodged at the Scott Correctional Facility in Plymouth.

Rodwan claims several rulings by Caprathe prevented Yost from receiving a fair trial. She focused her oral arguments on the court's disallowance of two proposed defense witnesses at the trial: An expert to offer possible explanations for what numerous prosecution witnesses characterized as Yost's "odd" responses to her daughter's death, and an expert toxicologist to counter testimony from the toxicologist called by the prosecution.

"Toxicology evidence was crucial in this case," Rodwan said in an e-mail to The Times on Wednesday.

Bay County Prosecutor Kurt Asbury gave oral arguments urging the appeals court to uphold the conviction.

"After hearing the oral arguments, I believe the appeals panel has a better understanding of where we were coming from and where Judge Caprathe was coming from," Asbury said.

In her written arguments, Rodwan also challenges the propriety of trial testimony from Dr. Kanu Virani, the medical examiner who conducted the autopsy on Monique, regarding his claim that children Monique's age are incapable of committing suicide; and videotaped testimony from Yost's former cellmate at the Bay County Jail that Yost confessed to putting pills into a drink and giving them to Monique before her afternoon nap on the day of her death. Rodwan claims that testimony prejudiced the jury and was not relevant to the charges at hand.

Each attorney had a half-hour to present their arguments. The arguments were presented before judges Thomas Fitzgerald, Jane E. Markey and Michael R. Smolenski at the Hall of Justice in Lansing.

A ruling from the appeals panel is not expected for several weeks at the earliest.

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BAD DAY IN PONTIAC

Police stretched to limit with emergency situations

By SHAUN BYRON
Of The Oakland Press

Pontiac police are continuing investigations into Wednesday's slaying of a man who was shot to death in his car, a 3-year-old child whose death has been ruled a possible homicide and a second shooting victim who refused to cooperate with officers.

All three cases are unrelated and come at time when police officials could possibly hand out pink slips to officers during the city's budget crisis.

The day began when witnesses called 9-1-1 just before 11 a.m. after hearing several shots fired in the southwestern part of the city and reported a car had crashed near an apartment complex.

Investigators say the victim, a 39-year-old Pontiac resident, was in a four-door car at the corner of Arthur Avenue and Franklin Road. As he began heading south on Franklin Road, several shots were heard.

"He appeared to be shot at. There were multiple shots and windows were shattering," Sgt. Kevin Braddock said. "He continued southbound on Franklin Road, where he crossed over Luther Avenue and jumped a curb on the west side of the street.

"At that point, he struck a fence and then a little apartment complex. Then he went up a little hill," Braddock said.

The shooter ran to where the man's car sat and fired several more shots into the man. He then ran around the apartment complex to an older model, gold-colored, four-door Chrysler Concorde that had tinted windows. The vehicle was last seen heading east on Luther Avenue.

People stood along the sidewalk across the street from the grisly shooting and in front of Tom's Market, near the southwest corner of Franklin Road and Luther Avenue.

Blood could be seen on the passenger and driver's seats and the rear window of the car was smashed.

Most of the people in the neighborhood said they knew nothing of the shooting and didn't want to give their feelings about what had taken place.

Two brothers remarked they didn't like what had happened and were shocked by the killing.

"It's tragic," one of them said.

Detective Sgt. James Martinez said they had collected shell casings from the area and also some cash that was on the street.

The pieces of evidence collected will be analyzed, and witnesses were taken to police headquarters for statements.

"Broad daylight," said Martinez, standing outside of the crime scene. Martinez said investigators from different units helping out with the investigation.

"You know the manpower shortage," he said. "We probably don't have another road car out to take another call right now."

The shooter is described as a black man with a medium complexion, in his early 20s, with a mustache and medium build. He was wearing dark jeans, dark boots and a multi-colored sweatshirt with a hood.

Police said he was carrying a black semi-automatic firearm.

Later, police were called about 2:20 p.m. to a Prall Street apartment where a 44-year-old man was shot in his left kneecap.

The man would only tell officers he was in the laundry room of his apartment complex when an unknown man burst in and shot him before running off in an unknown direction. Prall Street is off Huron west of Woodward, behind Pontiac Central High School.

"He refused to cooperate and was transported to an area hospital," Braddock said.

While probing the shootings, police are also investigating possible child abuse against a 3-year-old girl who was taken off life support. Officers were called Monday to the critical care unit of Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital.

According to police reports, the mother had told officers her daughter had put herself to bed. When her live-in boyfriend checked on the girl, she was unconscious.

"The child was taken to an area hospital and then taken to the critical care unit of Beaumont Hospital for treatment," Braddock said.

Investigators wouldn't release details about the child's injuries, but said there were several. The child was removed from life support Wednesday.

An autopsy is scheduled for today by the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office.

Braddock said a doctor told investigators the preliminary findings appear to indicate possible signs of child abuse.

"No arrests were made, but the mother has three other children and they were removed from the home," he said.

OAKLAND COUNTY NEWS BRIEFS

DETROIT FREE PRESS

PONTIAC: Dad convicted of pimping daughter

January 17, 2008

A Milford man could face up to life in prison after being convicted of having sex with his daughter and then setting her up as a prostitute, said Milford Police Chief Wayne Walli.

William Pattison, 48, is to be sentenced Feb. 5. He was convicted Tuesday of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and pandering before Oakland County Circuit Judge Shalina Kumar. Pattison is a former prison guard, Walli said, and had set up a Web site advertising his daughter as a prostitute. Police became aware of the situation in 2006. Pattison's daughter, now 27, served time in the Oakland County Jail for a misdemeanor prostitution conviction. She then told investigators about the abuse she suffered at the hands of her father as a teenager.

Detroit Free Press

January 17, 2008

**OAKLAND COUNTY
OAK PARK**

**Hearing is sought
to evaluate 2 boys**

Defense attorneys want a hearing to determine whether two children are competent to testify against a former Oak Park teacher in his retrial on charges he molested them in 2005.

In a motion before Oakland County Circuit Judge Denise Langford Morris, lawyers Robyn Frankel and Mitchell Ribitwer said the boys were coached so much they have no reliable memory of the alleged incident.

James Perry's conviction was overturned when it was learned police did not interview some witnesses.

DETROIT

Case is dismissed for a 911 dispatcher

Judge: Actions not negligent

January 17, 2008

By BEN SCHMITT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

In a case that drew national attention to the conduct of 911 operators, a judge dismissed charges Wednesday against one of two 911 operators accused of willful neglect in mishandling a call from a Detroit boy whose mother was lying unconscious in their apartment.

Judge Paula Humphries of 36th District Court said Terri Sutton, a 19-year veteran, may have been rude to the boy over the phone, but she requested a police car, which arrived within 5 minutes.

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After Humphries dismissed charges against Sutton, the boy, Robert Turner, looked at his father and said: "Daddy, what happened?"

"We lost," Robert Yelder, 57, told his son, now 7. "That lady's going home."

Robert, then 5, called for help when his mom, Sherrill Turner, 46, became unconscious in their apartment on Feb. 20, 2006. One dispatcher hung up on him. Detroit police arrived after Sutton requested assistance.

"Does rudeness equate to willful neglect?" Humphries said. "Having heard the tapes, I believe the operator may have been rude, but I don't see enough evidence for willful neglect."

Humphries dismissed the case before it got to a jury at the request of Sutton's lawyer David Lee. After prosecutors rested their case, Lee asked for the dismissal in a legal maneuver known as a motion for directed verdict.

Sutton screamed for joy after Humphries tossed the case.

"I feel very happy and I just want to thank Judge Humphries," she said. "This case has turned my life upside down."

Another 911 operator, Sharon Nichols, 45, is still on trial. Her attorney Cornelius Pitts also asked for a directed verdict; Humphries rejected the request.

Robert called 911 twice over three hours after his mother fell unconscious. It was later determined that she died of an enlarged heart.

Nichols took a call at 5:59 p.m. and coded the call as a prank. She did not request any response from police or EMS and her defense has been that she couldn't hear the boy.

Sutton took a call at 9:02 p.m. and first chided the boy, but then requested police, who responded within five minutes and found Sherrill Turner dead.

"I feel bad for the family, especially young Robert, but I did my job at the time," Sutton said.

Sutton said she is now working in the police department's property room. She said she was suspended for five days after the incident.

Robert's older sister, Takisha Turner, 24, said she's furious with the judge's decision.

"I think it's completely wrong that the judge let her off like that," said Turner, who is now raising Robert.

Turner said she's hopeful the jury will convict Nichols but still believes Sutton should also be held accountable.

"Not only was she rude and nasty, she didn't send an ambulance. She should have sent an ambulance first instead of police."

Lee said Humphries was courageous to dismiss the case.

"This case should have never been charged," Lee said. "It was a hasty, ill-advised decision to prosecute by the Wayne County prosecutor."

The prosecutor's office said because the Nichols case is still in progress it would not comment on Humphries' dismissal.

Contact **BEN SCHMITT** at 313-223-4296 or bschmitt@freepress.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080117/NEWS01/801170350>

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911 operator testifies she couldn't hear boy trying to help dying mom

January 17, 2008

BY BEN SCHMITT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The Detroit 911 operator who took the first call from a boy who called to get help for his mother testified this morning that she could not hear 5-year old Robert Turner on the other end of the phone.

"I'm sure I couldn't hear him. If I would have heard him I would have requested EMS," said Sharon Nichols, during her trial in 36th District Court in Detroit.

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Nichols is charged with willful neglect of duty for allegedly mishandling a call from Robert, whose mother fell unconscious in their Detroit home Feb. 20, 2006. Sherrill Turner, 46, died that day from what was later determined to be an enlarged heart.

Nichols also testified this morning that Robert hung up on her, contrary to the boy's testimony on Tuesday.

The boy called 911 at 5:59 p.m. and reached Nichols, 45. On the 911 tape, Nichols is heard saying "I'm gonna send the police to your house and find out what's going on with you."

That call was coded as a prank and neither EMS nor police were requested.

Robert called back at 9:02 p.m. and reached operator Terri Sutton who scolded him but requested a police response. Detroit police arrived at the apartment in about five minutes, records show, and found Sherrill Turner dead.

On Thursday, Sutton, had her charges dismissed by Judge Paula Humphries after prosecutors presented their case against her. Her attorney requested the dismissal and it was granted before the case went to a jury. Humphries said Sutton, who was a 19-year veteran, may have been rude to the boy over the phone, but she requested a police car.

Willful neglect of duty is a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail if convicted.

Come back to freep.com throughout the day for updates on this trial.

Contact *BEN SCHMITT* at 313-223-4296 or bcshmitt@freepress.com.



Moms waiting for teens to call

VIENNA TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, January 17, 2008

By Bryn Mickle

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VIENNA TWP. - The parents of two missing teens still are waiting to hear from them after the pair took a minivan and disappeared Saturday morning.

Investigators were checking a tip Wednesday that Hannah McConnell, 13, and her boyfriend, Gage Petherbridge, 15, were headed for the California coastline community of Huntington Beach.

Gage's mother, Mary Wismer, said a family member who lives in California was headed there to post missing-person fliers about the teens.

A niece in Colorado also was spreading fliers in case the pair headed there to snowboard, said Wismer.

Hannah's mother, Julie, said Wednesday night that she had not heard anything new.

The teens left notes and journal entries saying they were running away together and disappeared with Wismer's minivan and Mandy, Gage's cocker spaniel.

The parents believe the pair had almost \$700 in cash and could have been headed to California, Washington state, Nevada or Ohio.

Hannah is bi-polar and left her medication at home, her mother said.

Gage is a ninth-grader at Clio High School and Hannah is an eighth-grader at Carter Middle School.

Their names have been entered in a national database along with the minivan, a white, 1997 Pontiac Montana, license plate number 6DYW54.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Genesee County Sheriff's Department at (810) 257-3406.

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Standoff ends peacefully

Thursday, January 17, 2008

BOSTON TOWNSHIP -- An Ionia County man was arrested this morning after a 10-hour standoff. Sheriff's deputies went to a mobile home in the 1800 block of M-21 to execute a felony warrant for aggravated stalking about 6:30 p.m. Wednesday when the 37-year-old man barricaded himself inside. The department called in its tactical team. The Kent County Sheriff's Department and the state police also helped. With no response from the man for four hours, police used a robotic camera to search the home about 1 a.m., then entered the home about 3:30 a.m. and found the man hiding an hour later.

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Article published Jan 17, 2008

Shooting details scarce

By BOBBY AMPEZZAN
Times Herald

BURTCHVILLE TWP.- The details surrounding a police standoff Tuesday in the Indian Trail North mobile home park still are unclear, and neighbors who live near the involved home said they hardly knew what was happening.

At about 6 a.m., Ryan Bland, 35, shot Wayne White, 29, of Port Huron several times with a 9 mm handgun at 3772 Ojibway St., police said.

The incident ended a dispute involving Jessica Shannon, 28. Police said Shannon is Bland's ex-girlfriend and the mother of his 2-year-old daughter, but Shannon and White had started dating. The night before the shooting, White had slept at the house, police said.

Shannon has lived at the residence for several years. Bland recently had moved in, and Indian Trail property manager Tim Hoffman was quick to point out Wednesday that Bland never "officially" was a resident.

Police won't release the details surrounding the fight between Bland and White. When St. Clair County sheriff deputies arrived on the scene, they found Shannon and her baby in the street, unharmed.

After moving her to safety, they found White lying on the porch of the mobile home.

Outside Hoyt Trujillo's nearby home, blood streaked the ground, marking where police had dragged White's body from the porch. On Wednesday, Trujillo, 55, diluted a pool of blood outside his front door with water.

Trujillo said he didn't see officers dragging White's body past his home, but later in the morning, he opened his front door and found two police officers crouched in the narrow passage between his home and his shed. The officers quickly told him to go back inside.

Until about 4:10 p.m. Tuesday, police thought they were in a standoff with Bland. They last reported making visual contact with him about 11:30 a.m. About 3:30 p.m., they shot canisters of tear gas into the home and, detecting no response, broke into the home about 40 minutes later.

It was then they said Bland was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot to his torso.

Michelle Gross, 31, who lives next door at 3776 Ojibway St., said Shannon and Bland kept to themselves.

On Tuesday morning, however, she heard six gunshots and screaming.

"My boyfriend came in and told me to get down on the ground," she recalled.

Not long after that, St. Clair County sheriff deputies told the couple to leave their home.

For most of the morning, Trujillo sat watching the action outside his window. He and his sister, Gretchen Braun, 53, weren't told to evacuate until about 10:30 a.m., at which time they left their home unescorted and walked to the park's clubhouse.

Despite living a few doors from Trujillo and Braun and the same distance from what was believed at the time to be a

barricaded gunman, Thomas Bril, 19, and his mother Robin Bril, 45, said they were not told to evacuate. They stayed inside until the standoff ended at 4:10 p.m.

"Jessica (Shannon) seemed really nice," Robin Bril said. "We talked to her once in awhile."

"I've seen (Ryan Bland) around," Thomas Bril said. "He was always in the garage - always - (and) every once in a while he would ride or bike around the park. He was only here a ... few months."

Trujillo agreed the couple seemed quiet.

"You know, we never heard them fight or argue. They seemed peaceful, (but) I never realized there were two men living there," he said.

Autopsies on the bodies were performed Wednesday, and sheriff's detectives have sent blood samples to a Michigan State Police crime lab for analysis.

Shannon and her daughter were taken Tuesday night to a relative's home.



Boy fitted for wheelchair after months of wrangling with state about funding

Thursday, January 17, 2008

By Tarryl Jackson

Dawn Pickett couldn't get a specialty wheelchair for her 3-year-old special-needs son for more than a year because of red tape.

Pickett, whose son Will has a debilitating brain-formation disorder, had been trying without success to get the wheelchair approved and paid for since October 2006 through Medicaid and Children's Special Health Care Services.

"It's ridiculous because it's a medical necessity," Pickett said. "I was furious."

Will of Blackman Township was finally fitted for his specialty wheelchair Wednesday at Lyle Tarrant Center by the University of Michigan Hospital's wheelchair seating service after state Rep. Mike Simpson, D-Liberty Township, interceded.

Will is unable to sit up on his own, and the specialty wheelchair will help support his body and help him avoid further medical problems. He is currently in a more traditional wheelchair.

"This (wheelchair) will actually keep him healthy and alive longer," Dawn Pickett said. "That's his lifeline."

Approval for the wheelchair came about three weeks ago. Pickett called Simpson for help in November.

Simpson said this situation happens to hundreds of special-needs children in the state.

"William is just the human face of the problem," he said. "We interjected ourselves in the middle of this mess and found some disturbing things."

Will has cerebral palsy and lissencephaly, a rare brain disorder where there is an absence of normal folds in the cerebral cortex. As a result, Will lacks motor skills. He was diagnosed with the disorder at 4 months, and Pickett said his life expectancy is between 2 and 9 years old.

Making these specialty wheelchairs can cost anywhere from \$6,000 to \$20,000, Simpson said.

Jean Yoder, physical therapist at the Tarrant Center, said there are 20 to 30 special-needs children in the area who are waiting for specialty wheelchairs. She said most insurance companies do not cover them.

"This is a problem within the whole state," she said.

Specialty wheelchairs can be hard to obtain because of the back-and-forth process that goes on when paperwork is filled out, said James McCurtis, spokesman for the Michigan Department of Community Health.

McCurtis said a group consisting of his department, UM Hospital and other health providers, is working on how to make the process more efficient.

"This is a very unfortunate situation that happened to this little boy," he said. "We want to avoid as much pain as possible."

Simpson said he wants to meet with the state departments of Human Services and Community Health to figure out how to streamline the process.

“We're going to look at the system and see what needs to be done,” he said.

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Arbor Manor clears up violations

Thursday, January 17, 2008

By Kristin Longley

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Arbor Manor Rehabilitation & Nursing Center has corrected its health and safety violations, the state Department of Community Health said.

The Spring Arbor Township facility at 151 Second St. was reinspected last weekend and the state is recommending Arbor Manor receive its Medicare and Medicaid payments for newly admitted patients.

Those payments had been denied for Level Two citations, which are classified as having "potential for harm," said James McCurtis, Community Health spokesman.

Arbor Manor was cited in November for issues ranging from failure to maintain housekeeping to failure to provide necessary care, McCurtis said.

Arbor Manor officials said the facility was ready for re-inspection as of Dec. 7.

The nursing home made about \$40,000 worth of improvements, including new carpet and tile and new record-keeping software, said Kevin Ganton, president of Ganton Retirement Systems, which owns the nursing home.

Arbor Manor continued to accept Medicare and Medicaid patients while it was denied payments at a cost of about \$5,000 to \$6,000 a day, Ganton said.

"Arbor Manor is stronger and better today because of this process," Ganton said. "We'll continue to improve and grow."

Nursing homes must constantly be in compliance with about 1,000 federal and state regulations, according to the Health Care Association of Michigan, a trade organization. The citations range from Level One, potential for minimal harm, to Level Four, immediate jeopardy to a resident's health or safety.

Arbor Manor's official notice of compliance still needs to come from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The state said the agency likely will agree with its recommendation that Arbor Manor be reinstated as of last Sunday.

Vista Grande Villa, 2251 Springport Road in Blackman Township, and the Jackson County Medical Care Facility, 524 Lansing Ave., also were denied payments recently because of citations.

Both facilities have passed re-inspection and have had payments reinstated, the state said.

Several family members of Arbor Manor residents said the facility is and has been top-notch.

Doug Dicker of Jackson said the staff takes excellent care of his 97-year-old mother, Doryce, and he recommends the place to friends and family.

His father lived there, too, until he died.

``I couldn't ask for a better spot for them," Dicker said. ``All my worries have been taken away from me."

Ganton said his staff members worked hard to prepare for the inspection, and Arbor Manor ``has never looked better."

``It's been a time of growth and a time of learning," he said.

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News

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Filling a need

POSTED: January 16, 2008

ESCANABA — After months of planning and preparation by local dentists, nonprofit charities and concerned citizens, the new Care Free Dental Clinic was scheduled to open at noon today. The clinic is located at the St. Vincent de Paul Service Center, 115 N. 8th St., Escanaba.

The mission of the nonprofit organization is to provide free dental health care for uninsured, homeless and low-income residents of Delta County. The Care Free Dental Clinic will serve patients on Wednesday afternoons from noon to 5 and Friday mornings from 8 to noon.

"We are so excited that this day has finally arrived," said Paula Jacobs, president of the clinic. "This clinic fills a tremendous need for dental health care in our community. It represents the hard work and generosity of not just a few individuals, but of many, many people who shared our vision and were willing to give whatever they could to make it a reality."

The clinic is open to low-income residents of Delta County in need of emergency dental care who are not covered by Medicaid. The clinic is primarily intended to serve those who are in pain or who have immediate needs such as treating infections or filling cavities. Organizers will also provide dental health education to patients to prevent or reduce of dental disease and serve as a resource for information about dental issues in our area.

The clinic will not perform routine cleanings or advanced services such as fitting dentures or crowns. Patients must show proof of Delta County residency to be eligible for treatment.

Patients are also advised the clinic does not take appointments. Those who visit the clinic will be seen according to need rather than on a first-come, first-served basis. In some instances patients who require follow-up care may be asked to return at a later date for further treatment. For more information call 789-1627.

Organizers said the clinic is unique because it is not dependent on state funding but is entirely supported by donations from private citizens and businesses. The dentists and support staff who will care for patients volunteer their time. Every penny someone gives to the clinic goes directly to purchase needed equipment such as a compressor and x-ray head, as well as supplies like gloves and anesthesia. Donations are tax deductible and may be sent to Care Free Dental Clinic, 429 S. Lincoln Rd., Escanaba, MI 49829.

The Care Free Friends remind community members to purchase tickets to the upcoming "Desserts First" fund-raiser scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 24, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the William Bonifas Arts Center Gallery. All proceeds support the operating costs of the clinic. Attendees can enjoy a variety of desserts, fresh fruit, the Saykly's chocolate fountain, wine, coffee and entertainment by local musicians. Tickets are \$30 and are on sale now at Saykly's Confectionery and Gifts or Gust Asp in Escanaba.

"Desserts First" is a Thrivent Event, with Thrivent matching funds raised on a three-to-one basis, up to \$1,600.

Article Photos



Paula Jacobs

Published January 17, 2008
[From Lansing State Journal]

Dozier: CASE Credit donates \$4K worth of food

CASE Credit Union members and staff, and the general public, recently donated \$4,000 worth of food to the Greater Lansing Food Bank for distribution to local area food pantries.

Donations were accepted at CASE's nine Greater Lansing-area branches during November and December 2007 for the credit union's annual Giving Tree Project.

In past years, CASE employees and members have made donations to such nonprofit organizations as the local Make-a-Wish Foundation, VFW National Home for Children, American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, The Salvation Army, March of Dimes, Capital Area Humane Society and Cristo Rey Community Center, to name a few.

For more information, contact Kathy Devine, CASE Member Relations, at 393-7710, ext. 1030 or kdevine@casecu.org

\$450 million in federal home heating aid given to states

By KIMBERLY HEFLING
The Herald-Palladium

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration on Wednesday released \$450 million in emergency relief funds to help needy residents pay soaring heating bills.

Lawmakers and heating aid advocates had pressed President Bush to provide additional funding to states through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. It was feared that some states would soon run out of money to distribute through the program.

“The funding comes at a key time,” said Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., who said in a statement that many residents are having to choose between heating or eating. His home state gets more than \$44 million.

The top recipient is New York, which receives \$82 million. Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey and Ohio each receive \$25 million or more.

Record home heating oil prices have squeezed cashstrapped households. Residents in the Northeast, which leans more heavily on oil heat than other regions, have struggled with oil prices that have topped more than \$3 a gallon.

Relying on information from the Energy Information Administration, several senators told Bush in a letter late last year that households can expect to pay 10 percent to 22 percent more for heating fuels this winter than last, and home heating prices are expected to reach almost \$1,000 this year per household.

Congress recently approved roughly \$2.6 billion for LIHEAP, and Bush signed the measure on Dec. 26. It’s about \$409 million more than last winter, but fuel aid advocates had warned that it wasn’t enough to keep pace with record oil prices.

On the Net:

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap>



Vietnam vet helps homeless brethren

Thursday, January 17, 2008

By Pat Shellenbarger

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- It was 8 a.m. and snowing when Robert Wilson stepped inside Degage Ministries, a place he might have visited as a homeless man. This time, he was on a mission different from those he used to go on four decades ago.

The place was crowded with the homeless and nearly homeless who came for a cup of coffee, conversation and warmth. Wilson approached four men playing dominoes.

"Any of you veterans?" he asked.

It is a good bet in any group of four homeless people, at least one is a veteran.

"Yeah," said one of the men, David Bates. He was in the Army from 1968 to 1970, and later diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder after his Vietnam service. No, he said, he doesn't get any veterans benefits. Most nights, he stays in the Mel Trotter mission in the city's Heartside district.

"We're gonna get you in a PTSD program," Wilson said. "We'll get you a place and get you some services."

He handed Bates a card that read "EverSharp Veterans Inc." and went looking for more veterans.

On any given night, an estimated 340 veterans are homeless in Kent County, a study last year by Goodwill Industries estimated. Nationally, an average of 195,827 veterans were homeless most nights in 2006, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

Death 'never leaves you'

Wilson, 60, limped along South Division Avenue. When he awoke that morning, his left leg was numb, maybe from an old football injury, maybe from jumping out of a helicopter in Vietnam 40 years ago.

He was an 18-year-old student and football player at what then was Grand Rapids Junior College when he got his draft notice in 1966. He joined the Marines and, by fall the following year, was leading reconnaissance patrols in the jungles of Vietnam.

He remembers Sept. 25, 1967.

"That was the first time I seen somebody I killed," he said. "It's an experience that never leaves you. Every Sept. 25, I relive that. I saw a lot of 'em. I called in a lot of artillery myself. Sometimes, I wonder how many people I pushed the button on and killed."

When he came home, he tried to readjust, taking a job as a prison guard in Ionia, then as a welder and brakeman for the railroad. He went back to school, but never could get promoted. He got married, drank, smoked dope, got divorced. He didn't know it then, but he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and medicating himself to forget what he had seen during 13 months in Vietnam.

He felt his life slipping toward the streets, but finally stopped the slide. He quit drinking, got treatment for PTSD, remarried and has been on disability since 1989 for an injured back and leg.

A couple of years ago, someone at a local veterans office suggested Wilson could help other vets. Many veterans, particularly those living on the street, don't trust the government and don't get the benefits they've earned. Wilson knew they could relate to him, so he founded his own nonprofit organization, called it EverSharp Veterans after the nickname for the unit he led in Vietnam and in honor of a friend who died there.

It's a one-man operation with \$40 in the bank and borrowed Goodwill office space.

"I think he's just incredibly dedicated to helping veterans," said Mary Ann Cheney, former director of development for Goodwill and an EverSharp board member.

Wilson hopes to open a building in Grand Rapids providing transitional housing, substance abuse programs and counseling for veterans, and he has his eye on a similar facility in Muskegon.

"We're better on ideas than we are on funding," said Ron Van Beek, a Vietnam veteran who helps Wilson apply for grants. "He's doing all this gratis. He's dedicated two years of his life to this."

Wilson insists he will succeed.

"I have faith," he said.

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Jobless rate in Michigan rises to 7.6% in December

State may lose 60,000 jobs in '08, economist says

January 17, 2008

By JOHN GALLAGHER

FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Michigan's battered labor markets ended 2007 on a sour note, with December's unemployment rate rising and the state's factories shedding more manufacturing jobs.

And it's not over yet.

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"We're looking at one more bad year," University of Michigan economist Joan Crary said Wednesday. She and her colleagues produce widely read and respected economic forecasts, and they estimate that Michigan will lose another 60,000 jobs in 2008 on top of the nearly 80,000 payroll jobs lost in 2007.

The state's December unemployment rate of 7.6%, up two-tenths of a point since November, is likely to rank as the worst in the nation when the federal government releases state-by-state rankings later this month. The national jobless rate rose in December by three-tenths of a percentage point to 5%.

Michigan has lost payroll jobs each year since 2001, according to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth. In December, the state's manufacturing sector shed 2,000 more jobs, offset by gains in education and health services (up 3,000 jobs) and professional and business services (up 2,000).

Crary predicted that the state would begin to see a moderation of job losses in manufacturing by 2009. That will allow Michigan's growth industries to push the state's totals into the positive range again later in 2009.

But the U-M prediction of a turnaround in 2009 depends on three key assumptions.

The first, Crary said, is that the Detroit Three automakers stabilize their sales figures, both through an expanding national demand and by slowing market share shrinkage.

Second, the state's residential real estate markets would have to recover to boost homebuilding and construction generally. Over the past couple of years, new home construction in Michigan has sunk to levels not seen since the early 1980s.

Finally, Michigan's recovery in 2009 depends on the nation as a whole avoiding a recession -- no easy task in an economy battered by the subprime mortgage meltdown, credit worries and a slipping stock market.

"Obviously one of the areas where people will cut back if there is a national recession is purchases of durable goods, including cars, and obviously we can ill afford that," Crary said.

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Economic turmoil

State's jobless rate up as workers flee Highest unemployment level in 14 years leads U.S.

Louis Aguilar / The Detroit News

Michigan's unemployment rate in 2007 hit its highest level in 14 years, losing a total of 90,000 jobs as the state draws near to what everyone hopes is the bottom of a very deep hole.

Worse than jobs disappearing is the fact that tens of thousands of residents are, too. A total of 40,000 people vanished from the state's labor force -- signs that the state's economy has been weak for so long that many potential workers simply quit the state to try their economic luck elsewhere.

The preliminary 2007 average jobless rate for Michigan was 7.2 percent, the highest since 1993 when the annual rate hit 7.4 percent, according to data released Wednesday by the state Dept. of Labor & Economic Growth.

The December unemployment rate also reached a troubling high of 7.6 percent, up two-tenths of a point from November's 7.4 percent, the highest rate in the nation.

The national unemployment rate for December was 5 percent; the national average jobless rate for the year was 4.6 percent.

As expected, the auto sector lost the most jobs in 2007, about 19,000, followed by 16,000 construction jobs as the housing market continues to reel from the subprime mortgage crisis. And retail jobs, shaken by lagging consumer spending, were down by 10,000.

The one sector that grew was education and health services, which gained 9,000 jobs, mainly in health care, state data shows.

"The most significant trend in Michigan's labor market in 2007 was the decline in the state's work force," said Rick Waclawek, director of the state's Bureau of Labor Market Information. "This has not occurred since 2003, and was primarily due to buyouts and continued restructuring in the auto industry."

Dianne Kimber lost her job when Ford Motor Co. shut its Wixom Assembly plant. Kimber was a contract employee who worked in janitorial services.

"I want to go into health care, hopefully home care," Kimber said. "Those seem like the kind of jobs that are growing these days."

At least she plans to stay in the Great Lakes state. For 2007, Michigan led the nation in the number of residents moving out, according to a survey by United Van lines. Nearly 68 percent of Michigan moves took residents out of the state, eclipsing the state record of 66.9 percent hit during the auto recession of 1981. Now Michigan is the home of what many local economists dub a "one-state recession" that started in 2003. This year, while still tough, may be the end of it if, as several economists predict, the state begins to see a slight upswing in jobs in 2009.

In the meantime, up to 51,000 jobs may disappear this year, according to a forecast by University of Michigan economists Joan Crary, George Fulton and Saul Hymans. The state's unemployment could hit 8.2 percent, a level not seen since 1992.

The job losses projected for this year in auto manufacturing will be 21,000, the U-M economists said. That trickles down to moderate job cuts in other sectors, including construction, professional and business services and trade, transportation and utilities, predicts Comerica Inc. chief economist Dana Johnson. Johnson said the vanishing workers are an indication "people are voting with their feet about the Michigan economy."

And the national economy slowdown will mean trouble for Michigan's job market this year.

"I think a cyclical downturn nationally will affect us, which may push the automakers to continue to go for more buyouts," Johnson said.

Not all sectors of the state economy continue to slide. Education and health services will add 10,000 jobs, the UM forecasters say. The tourism industry should grow as the high price of gasoline and even the slow U.S. economy keep people closer to home for vacation, said Patrick Anderson, a Lansing economist. "Michigan is in the throes of a very serious recession," Anderson said. "But we see signs that we are starting to climb out."

The biggest reason is Detroit's Big Three went a long way last year in addressing structural problems of over-capacity, and in securing landmark labor contracts, Anderson said.

Automakers laid off nearly 100,000 workers in the past two years and announced more cuts and buyouts last fall.

Many former auto workers are going after health care jobs. In 2006, Ford began offering a buyout deal that covers schooling and 40 percent of workers who took the education option are studying in the medical field, with most specializing in nursing, followed by radiology, dental hygiene and pharmacology.

Olesa Allen has worked in the auto manufacturing field for much of her 20 years as a working adult. The daughter of a former GM assembly line worker, the current machinist for a small auto supplier is looking to go into health care.

"I make about \$4 an hour less than my previous job I had three years ago when I was paid \$16.94 an hour," Allen said. "The only way I can see myself making that again is going into health care. It's too hard to find good paying manufacturing jobs now."

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STATE'S DECEMBER UNEMPLOYMENT INCHES UP

The state's unemployment rate in 2007 was the highest it's been since 1993 as it inched up from 7.4 to 7.6 percent from November to December 2007, according to figures released by the Department of Labor and Economic Growth on Wednesday.

The state's unemployment rate was 7.2 percent in December 2006, four-tenths of a percentage point lower than by the end of 2007. The national unemployment rate at the end of the year was still lower than Michigan's at 5 percent.

DLEG reported that total employment fell in Michigan over the year by 90,000 or 1.9 percentage points. Nationally, total employment increased by .2 percentage points, but for December the country's jobless rate increased by three-tenths of a percent from 4.7 percent.

"Michigan's jobless rate has remained in the mid 7 percent range since August. The most significant trend in Michigan's labor market in 2007 was the decline in the state's work force. This has not occurred since 2003, and was primarily due to buyouts and continued restructuring in the auto industry," said Rick Waclawek, director of DLEG's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives.

The state's annual average unemployment rate for the year was 7.2 percent, with total employment averaging 4.7 million and unemployment averaging 361,000. The state's annual labor force was just over 5 million.

The state's labor force decreased by 40,000 from 2006 to 2007.

The Detroit-Warren-Livonia Metropolitan Statistical Area's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December increased from 7.7 percent to 8.5 percent. Total employment in the area declined by 24,000 and unemployment rose by 17,000. The metropolitan labor force decreased by 7,000.

For the year, the jobless rate went from 7.6 to 8.5 percent. Total employment and the labor force declined in this area by 56,000 and 40,000, respectively. Unemployment hiked during that time by 16,000.

The average annual unemployment rate for the metro area was 7.5 percent and it marked the first time since 2003 when the annual unemployment rate

showed an increase. Since 2003, the area has averaged a 7.2 percent unemployment rate.

Seasonally adjusted payroll jobs in Michigan increased by 5,000 in December, totaling 4.2 million. Payroll jobs experienced little change in most industries, but there were moderate job gains in education and health services (plus 3,000) and professional and business services (plus 2,000). Education and health services are at their highest employment with 600,000 jobs in those industries in Michigan.

Manufacturing experienced a decline of 2,000 jobs.

For the second half of 2007, jobs were steady in the trade, transportation and utilities, professional and business service and leisure and hospitality service industries. Manufacturing, government and financial activity jobs had the biggest losses during that same time period.

Between December 2006 and 2007, payroll jobs in the state declined by 78,000 or 1.8 percent. For the year the major job losses were experienced in manufacturing (lost 25,000 jobs), government (17,000), construction (16,000) and trade, transportation and utilities (12,000).

However, seasonally adjusted average weekly hours and earnings of production workers in the manufacturing sector increased for December and for the year.